



Review of Zaha Hadid: The Complete Works

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ZAHA HADID: COMPLETE WORKS

By: Patrick Schumacher and
Gordana Fontana-Glusti

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When Zaha Hadid won the Hong Kong Peak competition in 1983, I sat with other bemused architecture students through one of her first public lectures. Nothing had prepared us for the 'flying beams' high above Hong Kong. The Peak site plan - published in all the architectural press at the time - appeared almost out of the blue; a vibrant suprematist stamp across the dullness of 80's pastel post-modernism.

Twenty years later Zaha Hadid has become one of the most famous architects in the world. Winner of the Pritzker prize in 2004, she has projects in Europe, Asia and the United States. Her early studies in mathematics, her studentship under Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, her diva like persona, are all well known and almost legendary. The Cardiff Bay Opera saga of 1994, almost stalled her career midflow, and deprived us of an extraordinary building. Still at the tender age of 53 (architecturally speaking), this may seem an unusual moment to bring out the Complete Works.

A Cartesian explosion of books pulling out of a transparent box, this publication is a cabinet of Zaha's architectural curiosities. The ruby-red perspex box is cut with her name, leaving the shapes of the letters looking like one of her own drawings. Inside this sculptural case are four hard backed volumes: Major and Recent work, Project Documentation, Process: Sketches and Drawings and Text and References. The smallest of the books - Sketches and Drawings - almost resisted extraction, in my copy. But once removed, it reveals the hidden treasures of Zaha's calligraphic sketches, traces and studies for four of her projects. For



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her, drawing is the most important research.

Text and References, has Peter Cook with ever more AA anecdotes, while Patrick Schumacher discusses the seriousness of play and Hadid's work in a wider cultural context. Hadid's own voice (usually direct and refreshingly outspoken) is unfortunately missing, as she leaves it to others to debate her merits.

Project Documentation, reveals a diversity of work from a tea and coffee set to speculations for entire cities. Coverage in this part of *Complete Works* is restricted to only one image and a short text for each entry. Many projects, such as the recent Zorrozaurre Master plan, the BBC Music Centre competition and Guangzhou Opera House all warrant much more space. ▶

► The larger, Major and Recent Work, concentrates on her built projects and is essentially the *raison d'être* for the publication. After a short prologue of the Hong Kong Peak competition and the Cardiff Opera House project, there is extensive coverage of the buildings being constructed or recently completed in Copenhagen, Rome, Germany, Austria, Cincinnati and Strasbourg. It is perhaps the Phaeno Science Centre at Wolfsburg in Germany-shown still under construction- that will be her most dramatic and accomplished building to date. With echoes of the sculptural concrete forms of the Marseille Unité, this building will take Hadid into a new territory, and will be the one I think that will best shape her reputation.

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Complete Works, is a deliberate showstopper. Hadid -herself a serious book collector- knows only too well the seduction of the book. Amidst the deliberate iconic qualities of such a publication, there are limitations. Even with the extensive cross-referencing between each of the books, by deciding to divide the information into four areas, the coverage, continuity and understanding of Hadid's overall work is severed. If the intention was to be expansive and complete, the reality is more one of stylistic fragmentation.

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Paul Clarke

Zaha Hadid: Complete Works

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